



MEDIA RELEASE

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City Announces Community Action Gardens Awards

Rockford – The City of Rockford Human Services Department is pleased to announce the award of over \$17,000 in grants to 20 gardens located throughout Winnebago and Boone Counties for the 2013 Community Action Gardens program.

The Community Action Gardens program is a collaborative project with the City of Rockford Human Services Department, Neighborhood Network, the University of Illinois Extension of Jo Daviess, Stephenson, Winnebago, and Boone, DeKalb and Ogle Counties, along with the support of volunteer Master Gardeners.

“Community Gardens are a time tested method of revitalizing neighborhoods, expanding green spaces, rebuilding social connections and assisting with food costs,” said Jennifer Jaeger, Community Services Director of the City of Rockford Human Services Department, a Community Action Agency. “We are pleased that Community Action can support neighborhoods in these efforts.” Jaeger indicated that the program is aimed at teaching the skills and then encouraging gardens to become self-sufficient. “Many of the gardens funded over the past several years have indeed come to the point that they did not need funding to continue their work,” Jaeger added.

“Gardens are as diverse and unique as the people that care for them – in ground plots, traditional raised bed or container gardens, or gardens created in straw or recycled materials. The people tending them range from skilled master gardeners to people who have never gardened before, from adults to youth, from those physically fit to those with mental or physical disability challenges,” said Cyndie Hall, Executive Director of Neighborhood Network. “I’m pleased to see people working together to grow healthy food and to create welcoming spots within their neighborhoods,” she adds. “An exciting aspect of 2013 is that we will have increased diversity in the people and the produce being grown. We anticipate everything from tomatoes to tomatillos, from broccoli to bok choy, from sweet peppers to jalapenos, and from head lettuce to greens.”

In 2012, the Community Gardens supported 21 gardens in two counties with volunteers contributing over 4,000 hours toward their maintenance. Many of the gardens served people in need, and all gardens contributed at least a portion of their produce to Plant A Row for the Hungry and area food pantries for a total donation of more than 5,500 pounds of vegetables.

The Community Action Gardens program is funded in part through City of Rockford Human Services-Community Services Block Grant under the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

For more information, please contact Christopher Greenwood at 815-967-4039 or Cyndie Hall at 815-967-4034.

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